

# ALABAMA MAYORS LEADING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

KEY TAKEAWAYS  
MEETING 2



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
Early Childhood  
Education



THE hunt  
institute



### MAYORS LEADING ACROSS THE NATION

In partnership with The Hunt Institute, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and the Alabama League of Municipalities invited all Alabama Mayors to participate in [Alabama Mayors Leading for Young Children](#), a series of virtual convenings focused on mayoral leadership in early childhood education. The second meeting highlighted several mayors who shared how they support early childhood in their communities. Alabama mayors heard from:

- The Honorable Nan Whaley, Mayor, Dayton, Ohio
- The Honorable Betsy Price, Mayor, Fort Worth, Texas
- The Honorable Gary Fuller, Mayor, Opelika, Alabama
- The Honorable Jake Bynum, Mayor, Weakley County, Tennessee
- The Honorable Mark Dorman, Mayor, Kershaw, South Carolina

### WHY ARE THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN IMPORTANT TO YOU, AS MAYORS?

- Like most cities, mayors don't control the school system or have a direct say in the education system, but children have been getting further behind.
- The best place to make an impact is in early childhood. It makes sense to voters that everyone should have a fair start. Data shows the impact that can be made in communities in the first 1000 days and, then, until five years old.
- It is not the most expensive place to enter on the continuum. Cities can have a significant impact and make a big difference for young children, for the education pipeline and, therefore, the workforce pipeline. It takes time, but the investment goes a long way.
- It is critical to find quality child care for working families where children can be safe and learn.

### RAISE AWARENESS

- Raise the profile of the importance of early childhood. Cities should be a place where families can do business, grow, have a great quality of life. The business community was not aware of the gap between access to high quality child care and brain development.
- Fort Worth did a listening tour with CEOs and business leaders asking what they are doing for families and educating based on statistics: One in three women will drop out of the workforce during child bearing years because they cannot find quality child care. Many business leaders had not thought about child care.
- Then, they started working with child care programs to ensure certified, licensed, and high quality.
- It is a long term approach.
- Educate parents on the options for high quality child care.
- Key message is long-term workforce development.
- Campaigning, people wanted to talk about jobs, but communities attract jobs with a willing, ready, and able workforce. Early childhood education that transitions into K-12 and higher education creates a pipeline to a willing, ready, and able workforce. Focusing on just the workforce is counterproductive. It starts before children enter the door in kindergarten.



### ROLE OF MAYORS

- Mayors have the unique ability to be the convener to help people identify it as a problem and create solutions.
- Fort Worth convened the 16 school superintendents and mayors to bring the issue to light.
- The bully pulpit is powerful to use. Advocate and talk about value and long term benefits of early childhood.
- Use a collective impact model leveraging nonprofits or business leaders to galvanize the community.
- Dayton used county-wide boards for initiatives so everyone has a role and ownership in initiatives.
- Dayton created a yearly education attainment summit for Ohio mayors, in partnership with the Gates Foundation, providing grants for mayors to choose areas to address such as early education or FAFSA.
- Focus on areas mayors can have an impact such as after school, summer, before children turn five to help children become “ready” and be part of the workforce. Those areas are places where mayors can have leadership.
- Leverage local dollars to generate impact for economic and community development.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD AS A BIPARTISAN ISSUE

- With so much research about the importance of early childhood and the need for high-quality child care to attract businesses to a community, early childhood is not a partisan issue.
- Employees will not stay in a job or company if the environment is not positive. They will move to a company that offers onsite child care or other incentives or benefits related to child care.
- What opportunities coming out of the pandemic do we have to reshape child care to improve quality and make it accessible to everyone?
- Child care must be promoted as a profession. Compensation for the workforce must be increased to make child care more available to communities. Lack of child care has affected women’s ability to work.
- Estimates: Cost of pre-K in Alabama \$5,000; incarceration costs \$15,000. Census shows inmates often have dropped out of school and they do not have an education. Spending \$5,000 today prevents spending \$15,000 in the future.
- Access to child care in small communities will bring people, jobs, and resources.

### RESOURCES AND FUNDING

- Dayton passed an earned income tax to fund Preschool Promise, along with other issues such as roads and paving, as an infrastructure investment effort in the city. Learn to Earn has been partnering with Ready Set Soar to determine what preschool could look like in the community. Passed a levy in 2016 for eight years to collect data and research at how the children are doing from year to year. Access is on a sliding scale so everyone has access in the City of Dayton using state and federal funding first then using a sliding scale for parents to enroll children in preschool.
- Dayton also provided professional development and coaching to improve quality of programs participating in Preschool Promise.
- Earned tax allowed the city to be flexible based on the funding source. Local sources have more flexibility than the state or federal governments.



### *Continued*

- Dolly Parton Imagination Library was established through a foundation created by the Governor, the Governor's Early Literacy Foundation. The state legislature makes an annual appropriation that funds approximately half of the program statewide. Local organizations fundraise for the remaining half of the program for the local community. Weakley, Tennessee also partnered with local corporations (i.e., Dollar Store, Delta Dental) that have contributed to the program to expand to offer programming for Kindergarten through third grade to send home summer reading materials to prevent the "summer slide".
- Kershaw, South Carolina received a South Carolina First Steps 4K grant of \$600,000 to renovate a historic downtown building into a child care and early education center. The city has raised approximately \$400,000 to complete the renovations including a playground. The town will own the facility and the program will operate the program.
- Opelika, Alabama provided the city-owned train depot building to expand the First Class Pre-K program with support of a local foundation. The city also provided funding for the school district to expand First Class Pre-K.

### **ADVICE**

- Use the bully pulpit, use political capital because it is critical for educated citizens in communities.
- Be bold and use foundation supports.
- Think of the people that do not have a voice – that is probably a four-year-old in your community today.
- Stand it up as a 501c3 or a separate foundation with a board so when you leave office, the work will continue.
- Small communities must get funding outside the typical budget. To get that funding, need community buy-in.

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### **RESOURCES:**

#### **Meeting One**

- [Recording](#) / Access Passcode: ALMayors!1
- [Issue Brief](#)
- [Key Takeaways](#)

#### **Meeting Two**

- [Recording](#)
- [Issue Brief](#)

Meeting Three of [Alabama Mayors Leading for Young Children](#) will be held May 25, 2021, with a discussion on the opportunities to lead on early childhood in Alabama.